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Mindfulness and grief: The missing ingredient in griefwork

Statement of the Problem: It is estimated that 90% of people who seek mental health services do so for some form of unresolved grief, suggesting the dire need for an updated approach to bereavement. Mindfulness practice helps not only to endure grief, but to transcend and even expand the very best of human qualities as a result of it. Author of *The Wisdom of Grief* and a psychotherapist in private practice for 20 years, the presenter shares her expertise and success in implementing mindfulness practice during each phase of grief in order to help people move fluidly through all levels of this challenging but universal human experience.

Method: The author describes the particular mindfulness practices applied to distinct aspects of grief that shift the process from one solely of misery to one of grace and wisdom. Specific contemplations are outlined as antidotes to common grieving stumbling blocks such as anger, guilt, isolation, resistance, and depression. Detachment in the griefwork process of identity reformation is discussed. Qualitative results and specific anecdotal outcomes demonstrating clients' increased sense of inner strength; improved self-perception; increased forgiveness in fraught relationships; documented decrease in depression; and enhanced connection with life elements beyond the self are explained.

Discussion: Mindfulness applied to the grieving process has huge implications for prevention in mental health care, releasing people from the residual guilt, anger, and unresolved sorrow so common to grief and loss and thereby expanding empathy, compassion, forgiveness, and mercy. Through bringing greater meaning and context to the process, it assists in turning traumas into great sources of inner wealth.

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Biography

Leslie Hunt Palumbo, LCSW, is a Psychotherapist, Grief Counselor, and Author who has worked extensively in Bereavement and Mindfulness over the past 20 years. In addition to her clinical training and experience, she has trained with Pema Chodron and Eckhart Tolle. A special focus is working with the bereaved, both as a gentle guide for families through the hospice experience and as a facilitator, helping people access the peace available even in the midst of great loss. She has taught Mindfulness during loss to individuals, small groups and workshops throughout the world, and is currently leading retreats, group & individual teachings on the Gifts of Grief. Explore the book, *The Wisdom of Grief: Mining the Treasure Inherent in Great Loss* at www.wisdomofgrief.com, and find out more at www.lesliepalumbo.com or visit her at www.facebook.com/wisdomofgrief.

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